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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000917

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MASS](#) [YM](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#) [DOMESTIC](#) [POLITICS](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES TERRORIST THREAT, SAADA WITH FM QIRBI

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas C. Krajewski for reasons 1.5 b and d.

1. (C) Summary. Ambassador and Foreign Minister Qirbi met on April 9 to discuss the current threat environment for Americans in Sanaa as well as the situation in Saada. Following up on Ambassador's meeting with President Saleh earlier the same day, the FM listed needed USG assistance in combating the renewed al-Houthi insurgency in the northern Saada region. End Summary.

Ansar as-Sunna Threat

2. (S) Qirbi asked Ambassador for his assessment of terrorist activities in the region. Ambassador said there were many regional concerns, but that he was specifically concerned about the Jihadist pipeline along with the return home of Yemeni Jihadists from Iraq. Yemenis are coming back with new operational experience, he said, and they are looking for targets and establishing new cells. "They are being arrested and interrogated upon their return, Yes?" asked Qirbi. Not all of them, Ambassador replied. Qirbi inquired on the quality of Political Security Organization (PSO) and National Security Board (NSB), cooperation on the Ansar al-Sunna threat. Ambassador told FM that the we enjoy a good, cooperative relationship with both NSB and MOI, and that on the most urgent issue wrapping up the Kanaan cell, the PSO was being very responsive as well. Although we are indeed concerned with spread of Saada-related violence to Sanaa, the current high alert and Authorized Departure status, explained Ambassador was related to the very dangerous and specific threat raised by Kanaan (Note: Saada related grenade attacks on military leaders in downtown Sanaa covered septel. End Note).

How Did He get Here?

3. (S) "How did Kanaan get back here?" Qirbi asked Ambassador, "where was the failure?" Ambassador pointed to problems in Yemen border security and the lack of coordination between countries in the region. He noted that in his journey back to Yemen from Iraq, Kanaan raised the attention of both Jordanian and Saudi security services, but had managed to allude them. Better coordination between regional players, suggested Ambassador, was required. Document integrity is another problem, continued Ambassador. (Note: To improve the situation, Post has proposed USG assistance to MOI border guard forces and MOI CT investigators, as well as advocated for greater information sharing and security assistance to Yemen from its Gulf neighbors. End Note).

We Need USG Support and Assistance in Saada

4. (S) Qirbi asked Ambassador for staunch USG support for the ROYG-side of the al-Houthi battle. On the political level, Qirbi said, "there is no doubt" that the Believing Youth are a terrorist organization -- "they used terrorist tactics and they have outside financial support (re: Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah)." Qirbi said that although al-Houthi's movement started as a Zaidi, Yemeni sect, it had evolved into a more militant organization and Shia unrest could expand to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. (Comment: while the Believing Youth may indeed have outside links, this is not the first time that Qirbi has show traditional Gulf mistrust of Shiites. End Comment).

5. (S) Turning to military needs, the FM reiterated Saleh's request for U.S. military and logistical support for ROYG forces fighting in Saada, namely M113 APCs and HMWVVS. Ambassador assured Qirbi we would do all we could to speed up delivery of equipment, but, in the meantime stood ready to assist the ROYG more immediately should we receive a request for intelligence sharing. Qirbi thanked Ambassador and stressed the need for the USG to strengthen military and political support for the ROYG in this fight quickly, before "others take advantage of the fact that our security forces are overstretched in Saada." Qirbi also asked for U.S. terrorist-financing assistance to isolate the source and stop the flow of funds to al-Houthi followers from abroad.

Ambassador mentioned ongoing USG efforts to provide training for the CSF-CTU, as well as the presence of a U.S. military advisor located in the CSF operations center.

Qirbi Visit to Washington?

16. (C) On the FM's intentions to visit Washington in the Spring, Qirbi said he would prefer to wait until a decision was made on Saleh's potential visit to the White House next Fall before preceding with plans for his own trip.
Krajeski